

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH AND
MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

AGN. NO. _____
AUGUST 23, 2016

USE OF PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATION FOR FOSTER YOUTH

Over the past several years advocates and child welfare leaders have been addressing the use of psychotropic medication for youth in the dependency and delinquency systems and the possible overreliance on these medications in lieu of appropriate or significant therapy.

Here in Los Angeles County, the Office of Child Protection has deemed this a priority issue and has begun efforts to develop a County approach to the appropriate integration of psychotropic medication in the caring for children in the child welfare system.

Nearly one in four California foster teens is prescribed psychotropic drugs; of those nearly 60 percent are prescribed an anti-psychotic – the powerful drug class most susceptible to debilitating side effects. The use of psychotropic drugs is nearly three times the rate for non-system involved youth nationwide. This is especially disquieting considering the over-prescription and overuse of psychotropic medications for system-involved youth has been infrequently studied or monitored, making it difficult to improve practices.

As a result, there is pending state legislation that seeks to curb this alarming trend.

Senate Bill 1291 (Beall, D-San Jose) would require county mental health plans to create a subsection for foster youth and submit an annual foster care mental health service plan to the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). County mental health plans would be required to detail the array of services - from prevention to crisis services - available to children and youth to ensure that youth were given appropriate, quality mental health services and not only prescribed

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medication. These plans would be reviewed by an external quality review organization and DHCS must conduct annual audits of county mental health plans to assess the provision of services to foster youth. SB 1291 will enable the state and county to track access, quality, and outcomes specific to foster children in order to identify and address problems before they reach a crisis state.

Senate Bill 1174 (McGuire, D-Healdsburg) would require the California Departments of Health Care Services and Social Services to provide the Medical Board of California (MBC) with information to conduct an analysis of Medi-Cal and managed care prescribing patterns of psychotropic medications to determine if excessive prescribing exists and, if so, to take appropriate action. SB 1174 would build upon the one-year trial Data Use Agreement between DHCS and MBC that allows for the sharing of prescriber data in order to provide effective oversight into the use of psychotropic medication and identify excessive prescribers.

Senate Bill 253 (Monning, D-Monterey) would require doctors to go to greater lengths to justify prescriptions by revising and strengthening previous juvenile court oversight requirements for administration of psychotropic medications to foster youth.

These legislative efforts are important for the County to support as we address the distribution of medications to children in the County's care, especially in relation to the mental health therapy and services that these youth should be receiving.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors send five-signature letters to the Governor and the State Legislative Leadership in support of **Senate Bill 1291**, **Senate Bill 1174**, and **Senate Bill 253**, addressing the utilization of psychotropic medication on vulnerable youth.

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